

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
MCT-01 IO-13 AID-05 IGA-02 SSM-03 /100 W
-----241733 030142 /43

O P 241628Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3147
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 225
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CIA WASHDC
COMSIXTHFLT
COMPHIBRON SIX
COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 0826

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION FEBRUARY 19-24

REF: BEIRUT 0739 (DTG 181621Z FEB 77)

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1. SUMMARY. THERE HAS BEEN FIERCE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH OVER THE PAST WEEK. PREDICTIONS OF ASF RAIDS ON PALESTINIAN CAMPS IN BEIRUT FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. PRESIDENT SARKIS PLANS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CABINET MINISTERS FROM EIGHT TO TWELVE, ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS. THE KFUR FRONT HAS GIVEN THE UNITED STATES AND FRANCE MEMORANDA CALLING FOR INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES FOR LEBANON, WHILE THE FRONT'S UNITED COMMAND HAS

AGAIN PROTESTED THE NEW MILITARY RETIREMENT LAW. BECHIR GEMAYEL WAS BRIEFLY DETAINED BY SYRIAN SOLDIERS IN BEIRUT ON FEB 23. CAMILLE CHAMOUN MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD IN DAMASCUS ON FEB 21. THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY HAS REPORTEDLY AGREED TO PROVIDE LEBANON WITH \$33 IN AID. EMBASSY BEIRUT WILL HENCEFORTH PROVIDE A WEEKLY SUMMARY RATHER THAN THRICE-WEEKLY SITREPS. END SUMMARY.

2. HEAVY FIGHTING IN SOUTH.

THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY FIERCE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH OVER THE PAST WEEK AND MAY TAKE THE ISSUE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL, ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS. ONE OF THE HEAVIEST ARTILLERY EXCHANGES YET EXPERIENCED IN THE SOUTH TOOK PLACE ON FEB 19 BETWEEN PALESTINIANS IN THE NABATIYAH AREA AND CHRISTIANS IN THE QULAYAH AREA, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE DATT SOURCES. ABOUT 70 ROUNDS LANDED IN NABATIYAH PROPER, CAUSING MANY CIVILIANS TO FLEE TO SIDON. THE SAME DAY, CHRISTIAN FORCES IN CONTROL OF KHIAM EXECUTED 36 COMMUNISTS, INCLUDING DR. SHUKRULLAH KAREM, THE PARTY'S LEADER FOR SOUTH LEBANON ACCORDING TO THE SAME SOURCES. ON FEB 21 THE CHRISTIANS BEGAN ATTACKING NORTH FROM KHIAM AND MARJAYUN TO SEIZE IBL AS SAQI AND BALAT. THEY GAINED CONTROL OF BALAT ON FEB 22, BUT HAVE NOT YET ENTERED IBL AS SAQI.

3. NO RAIDS ON PALESTINIANS.

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A. PRESS PREDICTIONS OF A "SECURITY WEEK" MARKED BY ASF RAIDS TO SEIZE WEAPONS IN PALESTINIAN CAMPS IN BEIRUT HAVE NOT MATERIALIZED. THE KUWAITI REPRESENTATIVE ON THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE, AMBASSADOR ABDUL HAMID BAIJAN, SAID IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ON FEB 21 THAT THE ASF SHOULD ENTER THE CAMPS ONLY WITH THE "UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION" OF THE PALESTINIANS.

B. BRIGADIER MUSA KANAAN, PRESIDENT SARKIS' SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COMMITTEE, TOLD DATT ON FEB 23 THAT THE FOUR MEMBERS HAD ACCEPTED THE GOL'S INTERPRETATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND PLACED LIMITATIONS ON PALESTINIAN WEAPONS, AREAS OF OPERATION, FORCE LEVELS, MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. KANAAN DID NOT EXPECT RENEWED FIGHTING IN THE BEIRUT AREA OVER THE NEXT WEEK, SINCE HE BELIEVED ALL PARTIES WISHED TO AVOID AN IMMEDIATE CONFRONTATION, BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGED THERE WAS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY OF AN

UNPLANNED INCIDENT.

4. CABINET RESHUFFLE EXPECTED.

THE RIGHTIST BEIRUT DAILY AL BAYRAQ REPORTED ON FEB 23 THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL SHORTLY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS FROM EIGHT TO TWELVE, POSSIBLY BY BRINGING MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES INTO THE CABINET. THIS WOULD ACCOMPLISH TWO PURPOSES, ACCORDING TO THE PAPER: IT WOULD RELIEVE THE WORK LOAD OF THE EXISTING MINISTERS, AND FACILITATE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARLIAMENTARY BLOCS, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE CHAMBER DOES NOT HAVE LEGISLATIVE POWERS UNDER THE CURRENT STATE OF EMERGENCY.

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5. KFUR FRONT MEMORANDA.

BEIRUT RADIO ANNOUNCED ON FEB 19 THAT THE KFUR FRONT HAD DELIVERED MEMORANDA TO SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE AND FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD VIA THEIR RESPECTIVE EMBASSIES ON FEB 18. THE BROADCAST QUOTED
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PIERRE GEMAYEL AS SAYING THE MEMORANDA HAD STRESSED THE NEED TO ESTABLISH THREE "GUARANTEES" TO INSURE A LASTING PEACE:

A. BY LEBANESE ALONE TO PROMOTE AN ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL CONFIDENCE?

B. BY EGYPT, SYRIA, KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA TO INSURE LEBANON'S "EXISTENCE, INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY;"

C. BY THE UNITED NATIONS, THE UNITED STATES AND SOVIET UNION "TO PRESERVE LEBANON'S SPECIAL CHARACTER IN THE MIDDLE EAST."

6. KFUR FRONT PROTESTS.

ON FEB 22 KFUR FRONT LEADERS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL AND FATHER CHARBEL KASSIS MET WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHILE THE FRONT'S MILITARY ARM, THE UNITED COMMAND, HELD AN "EMERGENCY MEETING" CHAIRED BY BECHIR GEMAYEL. BOTH SESSIONS WERE HELD TO PROTEST THE FEB 10 DECREE-LAW AIMED AT INDUCING SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS TO RETIRE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS. CHAMOUN TOLD REPORTERS AFTERWARDS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD ACCEDED TO FRONT DEMANDS THAT WORTHY OFFICERS "NOT BE THE VICTIMS OF INJUSTICE."

7. BECHIR GEMAYEL DETAINED.

ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES, SYRIAN SOLDIERS MANNING A CHECKPOINT IN EAST BEIRUT DETAINED BECHIR GEMAYEL ON FEB 23 AFTER A MINOR DISPUTE AT A SYRIAN CHECKPOINT. CHRISTIAN MILITIA AND SYRIAN FORCES IN THE AREA WERE PLACED ON ALERT AND THERE WAS SPORADIC FIRING IN ASHRAFIYA FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE AND A HALF HOURS. THERE WERE
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NO REPORTED CASUALTIES. AHMED AL-HAJJ PERSONALLY CAME TO THE SCENE TO NEGOTIATE AN END TO THE INCIDENT.

8. TRAVELERS.

WHILE EN ROUTE HOME FROM AMMAN, NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN MET WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD IN DAMASCUS ON FEB 21 TO DISCUSS INCREASING FRICTION BETWEEN SYRIAN SOLDIERS AND LEBANESE CHRISTIANS IN BEIRUT, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES. MEANWHILE, SOVIET DIPLOMAT MIKHAIL SYTENKO LEFT BEIRUT FOR MOSCOW ON FEB 21, THUS ENDING LEBANON'S "DIPLOMATICE WEEK," WHICH ALSO SAW VISITS OF SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE AND FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD. PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL LEAVE FOR CAIRO ON MARCH 4 TO ATTEND AN ARAB SUMMIT CONFERENCE WHERE HE WILL RAISE THE QUESTION OF SOUTH LEBANON, ACCORDING TO AN NAHAR.

9. EEC AID AGREEMENT.

ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL NEWS DIGEST ARAB WORLD, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY ON FEB 16 AGREED TO GIVEN LEBANON 30 MILLION UNITS OF ACCOUNT IN AID BETWEEN NOW AND 1981 (ONE UC EQUALS \$1.1). IN ADDITION, THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK WOULD GIVE LEBANON UC 8 MILLION AS A GRANT AND UC 12 MILLION IN LOW INTEREST LOANS, THE DIGEST SAID.
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